

System Configuration Team (SCT)

**Reasonable & Prudent Measure #26
Meeting Notes
August 26, 1999**

DRAFT

Greetings and Introductions.

The August 26 meeting of the System Configuration Team was held at the National Marine Fisheries Service offices in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was co-chaired by Bill Hevlin of NMFS and Jim Ruff of the Power Planning Council staff, and was facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The agenda and a list of attendees for the August 26 meeting are Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced may be too lengthy to routinely include with the meeting notes; copies of all enclosures referred to in the minutes are available upon request from Kathy Ceballos of NMFS at 503/230-5420.

I. Chief Joseph Gas Abatement Update.

The Corps' Marian Valentine reported that the Chief Joseph Gas Abatement Study is on schedule, and has in fact been accelerated a bit in order to produce a report by January 2000. When complete, the report will be submitted to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for approval.

We're currently in the middle of physical model studies, she continued; the sectional model is nearly ready to be watered up, and the Corps anticipates that they will be asking agencies to visit Vicksburg in early October to observe the various alternative flow deflector

configurations. The near-field study was completed in June, said Valentine; it went exceptionally well. The bottom line is that we're still on schedule for construction in 2002 and 2003, she said; approximately \$500,000 in Construction General funding will be needed for the model work in FY'00, and the total cost of the gas abatement work at Chief Joseph will be approximately \$40 million.

II. CRFM FY'00 Project Rankings.

Hevlin distributed Enclosure C, the most recent CRFM FY'00 Estimates and Priorities worksheet, which incorporates the state and federal (but not the tribal) project rankings. The Corps' John Kranda said that, since the last meeting, the Corps has been discussing this list internally; the result of those deliberations is the series of notes in the far right-hand column of the worksheet.

At the same time the Corps was discussing the FY'00 project list, Kranda continued, the state caucus developed scores for the items it had not previously ranked; those scores have also been added to this version of the spreadsheet.

Ruff noted that the tribal caucus' rankings still have not been received; however, next Monday, the tribal caucus has scheduled a meeting to discuss their priorities. CRITFC's Tom Lorz reported that the tribal rankings are actually done, but the tribal caucus needs to approve them before they are forwarded to the SCT.

. At Ron Boyce's request, Kranda said he will distribute the complete set of FY'00 workplans for the SCT's information.

Kranda explained that descriptions and cost estimates that have changed since the spreadsheet was last distributed are highlighted in grey. The group spent a few minutes going through these changes, providing a few additional comments; much of the discussion was focused on the Corps' new proposal that the additional John Day spillway surface bypass item receive zero funding in FY'00. It was suggested that FFDRWG probably needs to have some additional discussion on the future of this project. In response to a question from Hevlin, it was agreed that both the Portland and Walla Walla District FFDRWGs will be invited to participate in this meeting.

With respect to The Dalles Surface Bypass line-item, Boyce said Oregon questions the need for this project in FY'00.

The group discussed the need to develop a systemwide plan for improvements at the Lower Columbia projects, similar to what has been done for the Lower Snake projects. Bob Willis replied that the Corps is already looking at this issue, through the Lower Columbia Feasibility Study; in fact, a preliminary draft report on John Day drawdown (the Anderson report) is now available. There was general agreement that it would be helpful to get a briefing from the Corps on its Lower Columbia Feasibility Study Phase I report at a future SCT meeting. Willis agreed to pull all of the relevant reports, studies and other materials together, and email

this information package to the SCT membership in advance of the group's September meeting. Hevlin added the comment that the \$50,000 shown for the Lower Columbia Feasibility Study in the current spreadsheet may not be adequate to provide for a full synthesis of all of the relevant information on the Lower River projects.

Kranda noted that, overall, based on the revised cost estimates included in the current spreadsheet, the estimated cost of the total FY'00 CRFM program has dropped from \$94 million+ to just over \$78 million. As most of you are aware, he said, it looks as though Congress is going to appropriate \$65 million-\$70 million for the CRFM program this year; savings and slippage puts the actual amount available down to the \$60 million-\$62 million range. Kranda added, however, that it should be possible for the Corps to get that \$5 million-\$8 million in savings and slippage back, if it is needed. In other words, he said, I think we can proceed on the assumption that we will have the entire \$65 million-\$70 million available.

In addition, said Kranda, the Division office has suggested that we may want to push the envelope a bit, because many contracts do come in under their original estimate, and because other monies sometimes become available if it isn't possible to complete a given project, such as adult measures last year, within the fiscal year. The bottom line is that it might be prudent to consider an FY'00 CRFM program that exceeds the anticipated appropriation by as much as 15%, Kranda said – if we get \$65 million from Congress, then a starting project list in the \$75 million range would probably be realistic. The worst thing that could happen is that we might have to stop work on a few of our lower-priority projects if the money runs out, he said.

Rod Woodin said he is very uncomfortable with this suggested approach; in my experience, he said, projects are more likely to come in over-budget than under-budget. In addition, he said, the Corps has repeatedly told us that it is as expensive or more expensive to stop a project once the contract has been let, because the contractor will generally sue. Kranda replied that this year is somewhat different than other recent years, because the list of CRFM projects doesn't include many major construction items.

In terms of next steps in the FY'00 CRFM ranking process, Hevlin reiterated that the tribal rankings should be available very soon; once those are received, he said, it is likely that the order of some of these items on the prioritized list will change. However, that may not be quite as important as we originally thought, because it sounds as though the Corps is recommending that we assume we'll have funding for nearly every item on this list, Hevlin said.

Boyce agreed with Woodin's point, saying that it would be more prudent, in Oregon's view, to assume that \$65 million, rather than \$75 million, will be available for the CRFM program in FY'00. If we assume \$75 million, and those funds don't in fact materialize, then we'll be in a dogfight by the second or third quarter of next year, he said. If we go with the more conservative approach, if the extra \$10 million does materialize, we can discuss what we want to add, not what gets cut, he said. Marv Yoshinaka said the Fish and wildlife Service also supports this more conservative approach.

Ruff said that, based on the fact that the CRFM budget has generally been underspent in the past, because work can't be completed or projects come in under budget, he would be more comfortable with setting the cutoff point at \$70 million, rather than \$65 million. He added that the Lower Granite Surface Bypass Program line-item is currently ranked right at the edge of the funding cutoff; that is because the state caucus has not yet agreed on a ranking for that item, and it currently has a score of zero, he said. We can probably resolve that over lunch, and come back to the afternoon session with a score for that item, said Ruff.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, no specific resolution was reached on the FY'00 CRFM funding cutoff issue; Kranda said he will convey the SCT's concerns to Corps management for further discussion.

Ruff added that it is his understanding that the tribal rankings will include five or six additional items the tribes are proposing be funded in FY'00; Lorz confirmed that this is the case. We understand that this is the 11th hour, he said; we would ask that they be considered for funding in FY'00, but if that's not possible, we want to be sure that they are submitted for funding in FY'01.

Woodin said that, in his view, adding new projects to the list at this point is a formula for disfunction. We've been dealing with this list of items for months now, he said, and I don't think it's realistic to expect us to consider five or six additional items, given the fact that this process needs to be completed prior to October 1, and the list already contains more projects than we can fund. Yoshinaka agreed; given the time-frame to complete this process, he said, it isn't very realistic to expect the state and federal caucuses to completely re-rank their lists. I understand that, said Lorz, but the tribes have made a policy decision that it is better to get the tribal position out on the table in FY'00. Our minimum hope is that the rankings we assign to the projects that are currently on the list will receive full consideration, Lorz said; we'll then do the best we can with the additional projects. The tribal rankings will receive the same consideration as the state and federal rankings, Hevlin assured him – that's our process.

Are you suggesting, Rod that the SCT not spend its time debating the new projects the tribes will be submitting for FY'00? Hevlin asked. Yes, Woodin replied. Personally, I'd like to at least see what they have, said Ruff – there may be something everyone really likes.

Boyce requested that the Corps furnish an assessment of which FY'00 contracts need to be let early in the fiscal year – the most critical items, from a timeline standpoint. Kranda said he can provide such a list prior to the SCT's September 14 meeting.

III. Lower Granite Surface Bypass Evaluation for FY'00 – Review and Discussion of Work Plan.

The Corps' Mark Lindgren said that, as most of the SCT is aware, 1999 was intended as an operational season for this project – we weren't planning to run any kind of elaborate test, and were instead going to convene a workgroup to focus on the year-2000 test. The workgroup developed some concepts, based on some of the better entrances in the region; the Corps decided

that there might be a way to operate the Lower Granite surface bypass in 1999 to give us some information on those new entrance configurations, through a limited hydroacoustic evaluation, he explained.

Lindgren went briefly through the results of the 1999 test; what we found, basically, is that the new entrance configurations produced significant changes in fish behavior, he said. Performance was higher than in 1998; there was less delay and wandering, and there was significant improvement to behavioral guidance system entrance, which was somewhat problematic in 1998. We also saw improved entrance efficiencies, and a significant change in fish trajectory, Lindgren added. In short, we saw some real changes in terms of what the fish were doing, which indicated, at least to us, that this surface-oriented entrance seems to be a good direction to go.

There was some additional work this summer, which we're just now completing, Lindgren continued. We did some additional fish tracking using 3-D sonic tags, in an effort to evaluate this new technology; we also did some detailed ADD measurement in an effort to calibrate our numerical modeling and better understand what's going on with the prototype. We also looked at a secondary list of variables, in addition to hydraulics, which may be affecting fish behavior – sound, magnetic and electrical signals. We've just finished collecting that data, he said, and have not yet had a chance to go through it to see what it tells us.

We also did some strobe light and turbulence testing at Cowlitz Falls this summer, Lindgren continued; the results from that test are not yet in.

Lindgren distributed Enclosure D, the Corps' FY'00 workplan for the surface bypass and collection project at Lower Granite Dam. The workplan includes information on the purpose and background of the test, test objectives, other activities, estimated FY'00 costs and other considerations. Lindgren spent a few minutes going through the contents of this document; please refer to Enclosure D for details of his presentation.

The objectives of the FY'00 test at Lower Granite include the following:

Determine what percentages of fish are using the SBC as a passage route compared to other passage routes (spill, turbine and existing bypass system)
Obtain a better understanding of fish behavior near the SBC and how it relates to hydraulic conditions and other environmental variables
Obtain additional information about the performance of the BGS.

The total FY'00 cost of the Lower Granite SBC test is expected to be \$7.425 million, said Lindgren; in general, this is what we're planning to do next year, and we need to look at this very carefully, to make sure everyone is comfortable with the planned test.

After a brief caucus break, Ruff said the FY'00 SBC test at Lower Granite has been assigned a score of 62 by the state caucus. Combined with the project's federal caucus score of 75, that gives the project a combined score of 137, placing it at about the \$49 million point within the prioritized FY'00 CRFM budget. Boyce noted that this is with the caveat that he would still like to see whether or not there is any possibility of reducing the cost of this project further; Ruff added that the state caucus feels that the spillway weir concept is a very high priority.

IV. Little Goose Trash Boom.

The Corps' Kevin Crum explained that trash has become a major concern at the Lower Snake projects and at McNary over the past several years, since the installation of extended-length screens at those projects and following several years of high flows, which have brought a huge quantity of debris down into the system. The Corps has been studying the debris problem, in an effort to figure out the best way to get it out of the system to avoid mechanical and biological problems at the projects. One of the key questions the Corps has been considering is what to do at Little Goose, because debris has been especially bad there -- there have been a lot of plugged orifices there in recent years.

The main option being considered at Little Goose is a trash shear boom, Crum continued; we have been working on plans and specs over the past year, with the goal of letting the contract and beginning construction at Little Goose in FY'00. He then spent a few minutes describing the complexities of the site, and some of the challenges the Corps engineers have faced in designing this system at Little Goose. Crum distributed Enclosure E, a pair of drawings illustrating the two alternative Little Goose trash shear boom designs.

Ruff observed that, when the state caucus went through their ranking process, they noticed a number of projects, such as the McNary trash shear boom and adult collection channel stoplogs which are similar, in that they are O&M-related -- essentially, he said, they are O&M projects that are being put into the CRFM program. We have tried, in the past, to get funding for monitoring and other projects, he said, and have been told by the Corps that we can't do that, because it's O&M funding. Now the Corps has

turned the table, and is stuffing these projects into the CRFM budget. Does the Corps have a response to that concern? Ruff asked.

This project was identified because of several instances of fish mortality at Little Goose, replied one Corps representative – our response was to try to correct the problem as quickly as possible. But why can't this be funded using Corps O&M dollars? Ruff asked. In response to another question from Boyce, the Corps representative said the trash shear boom at Lower Granite was paid for through the Corps' Construction General budget, and is maintained using O&M funds. Why couldn't we do the same thing at Little Goose? Boyce asked. It's a grey area, agreed Lindgren – where do you draw the line, and say O&M picks up the cost of a given item?

Hevlin said that, in his conversations with Steve Rainey and Jim Ceballos, it became clear that Alternative Design #1 is intended to act as more of a collector system, to allow the debris to be skimmed off and removed from the river, while Alternative Design #2 is designed to push the debris over the spillway and down the river. NMFS would prefer to see the debris removed, with the stipulation that, if Alternative Design #1 is chosen, the debris will be maintained and cleaned out regularly – when a certain debris threshold is reached.

After a few minutes of additional discussion, the SCT recommended that the Corps construct Alternative Design #1, the shorter "collector" trash shear boom design, with the understanding that NMFS' caveat be enforced, and that the debris will be skimmed regularly to reduce the risk of fish injury and avoid increased predation when debris concentrations are high. Crum said the contract will open for bids in mid-September.

The group devoted a brief discussion to the criteria or threshold for debris removal; it was agreed that this issue requires further discussion by the SCT or NMFS.

V. John Day E-Screen Development.

As discussed at the last SCT meeting, said Kranda, the District team has laid out a plan for how to get to a decision on John Day extended-length screens; the first draft of the plan is now available, and was discussed at a special FFDRWG meeting last week. He distributed copies of a revised draft of this plan, dated August 1999 (Enc. F).

We are now ready to initiate the gatewell modeling work at WES starting the first week of October, Kranda said; the schedule is very tight over the next two years if we are to be ready to test VBS flow control beginning in 2001, and to test an orifice prototype in 2002, if that is needed after the VBS flow control evaluation is completed. There is still confidence, among the Corps engineers, that the VBS redesign and flow control will address the problem we have been observing. Kranda spent a few minutes going through the contents of the current John Day e-screen plan; please see Enclosure F for details.

If we are able to address the problem through VBS modifications and flow control, said Kranda, this plan will put us on a track to install all of the screens at John Day by FY'04. If it is necessary to do the orifice prototype testing, however, it probably won't be possible to get all of the screens installed until FY'06. In response to a question from Boyce, Kranda said that if the orifice prototype testing is necessary, the total cost of the e-screen program at John Day, through construction and post-construction evaluation, is expected to be in the neighborhood of \$75 million. Given that fact, he said, as was mentioned earlier in today's meeting, we really need to take a hard look at all of the structural and operational alternatives at John Day, in the context of the Lower Columbia system as a whole, to see if there might be a better direction to go.

VI. FFDRWG Updates.

Kranda said the only FFDRWG meeting that has occurred since the last SCT meeting was the special session to discuss John Day; there was an SRWG meeting earlier this week, but participation was low. He asked anyone who has comments on any of the SRWG proposals to submit them to Rebecca Kalamasz or Rock Peters as soon as possible.

VIII. Next SCT Meeting Date and Agenda Items.

The next meeting of the System Configuration Team was set for Tuesday, September 14, from 9 a.m. to noon at NMFS' Portland offices; the topic of the meeting will be the FY'00 CRFM budget and project rankings. Meeting notes prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.